

## U.S. APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO RIDE OUT SAIGON POLITICAL STORM

### Administration Hopes a Facade of Civilian Rule Will Be Maintained

By JOHN M. HIGHTOWER

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27 (AP) — Johnson Administration officials appeared determined today to ride out the latest political storm in Saigon in the evident hope that a facade of civilian rule can be maintained in South Viet Nam.

The coup by which the military leadership under Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh ousted Premier Tran Van Huong caused no sense of crisis here. One apparent reason was that Washington has had to weather so many of these upsets in the last 15 months.

Coup leaders are reported to have indicated to the United States that they intend to operate as far as possible within the legal framework of civilian government, and to stick to plans for early election of a national assembly.

American policymakers were said to have found these indications encouraging though no one would predict what the future would bring in Saigon.

#### Rusk Awaiting Facts

Secretary of State Dean Rusk declined to talk to reporters other than to say "We're not commenting today until we have all the facts."

Senator Mike Mansfield (Dem.), Montana, the Senate majority leader, told reporters that he thinks U.S. Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor "is doing the best possible job under the circumstances which confront him."

"But," Mansfield said, "these coups make his already difficult job more difficult and delicate."

Mansfield came to the Senate floor with a piece of paper which he said showed that there have been eight changes in the Viet Name government since the Ngo Dinh Diem assassination in November 1963.

He said there have been "three coups, one attempted coup, one semi-coup and three other changes which are hard to classify."

In contrast with the Administration's approach, Senator George D. Aiken (Rep.), Vermont, said at the Capitol that he has "about come to the conclusion that Ambassador Taylor has about outlived his usefulness" in South Viet Nam.

#### Doesn't Blame Taylor

Aiken, an influential member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview:

"I'm not sure a successor would do any better there than Ambassador Taylor. I don't blame Ambassador Taylor. He's a top-flight military officer, but we need some down-to-the-earth type who could get closer to the people."

Aiken said he was beginning to have doubts whether the United States can "hold on long enough to Viet Nam until a stable government is established."

"If I knew just what to do, I'd be down at the White House steps waiting to tell the President," he said.

Aiken attended a closed briefing of the Foreign Relations Committee yesterday by John A. McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, which included questioning on the situation in South Viet Nam.

Senator J. W. Fulbright (Dem.), Arkansas, the committee chairman, was asked by reporters afterward whether

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another coup was "in the works."

He said the situation in South Viet Nam was "very distressing," but, as to whether another coup was in the works, he said,

"No, I do not think there is."

The coup dealt an obvious and severe blow to United States hopes for preserving and strengthening the civilian administration, of which the Huong regime had become the symbol and main instrument. Despite this setback, however, officials said privately that there was no thought of making a wholesale reappraisal of United States policy supporting the anti-Communist war effort in South Viet Nam.

After a similar political upheaval Dec. 20 in Saigon, the United States issued a public warning, aimed at Khanh and his associates, that the United States support was based on maintaining a government free of "improper interference."

No one arose here in the hours immediately following the latest coup to argue that the military ouster of Premier Huong constituted a proper or acceptable interference with civilian rule. The Administration's position seemed to be rather that the main concern at the moment must be to get on with the war effort while preserving civilian rule to the fullest extent possible.

President Lyndon B. Johnson was being kept informed of development in detail. The determination to ride out the storm apparently represented his own thinking.